

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 18, 2011

Agenda Item: Gate Creek Access Public Land Easement

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorse Course of Action

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

FWP proposes to purchase a permanent road easement across private land to provide public access to land owned and administered by the Ashland Ranger District of the Custer National Forest (U.S. Forest Service) and the Bureau of Land Management in Rosebud County. The proposed easement is located on an existing two-track road that extends from the Ashland-Birney Road along the Tongue River about 12 miles southwest of Ashland and 9 miles northeast of Birney. The easement crosses one-quarter mile of private land before connecting to an existing developed road on BLM; ultimately providing access to the Tongue River Breaks Hiking and Riding Area of the Custer National Forest, Ashland District. The road easement will provide year-round access to the national forest for public recreation and for all other legal uses of the national forest land. FWP further proposes to purchase the easement and to transfer the road easement, or administrative authority for the road easement, to the USFS.

Public Involvement Process & Results

An EA and subsequent public involvement is under development, pending commission endorsement.

Alternatives and Analysis

Proposed Action: FWP proposes to purchase permanent road easement, from a willing landowner, across private land to provide year round permanent public access to a large block of the Custer National Forest. FWP would secure permanent public access to this land for hunting as well as hiking, camping wildlife viewing and other outdoor recreational activities.

No Action alternative: FWP would forgo the opportunity to purchase a needed access easement. There would be no guarantee of public access to Forest service property from the Ashland-Birney Road. Should the property sell or the landowner have a change in management, public access would be lost or severely curtailed.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends commission approval to proceed. This project will provide public road access in perpetuity to a large block of public land in the Custer National Forest, including the Tongue River Breaks Hiking and Riding Area of the Custer National Forest, Ashland District.

Proposed Motion

I move the commission endorse FWP's recommendation to be negotiations for a permanent road access easement to provide public access to the Ashland District of the Custer National Forest.